

Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities

Annual Report 2006/2007



Table of Contents

Letter of Transmittal	1
Letter from the Chair	2
Year in Review	3
Appendix I: 2006/2007 Council Members	10

Letter of Transmittal

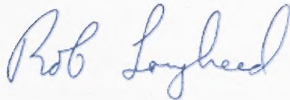
March 31, 2007

The Honourable Ed Stelmach
Premier of Alberta
307 Legislature Building
Edmonton, Alberta
T5K 2B6

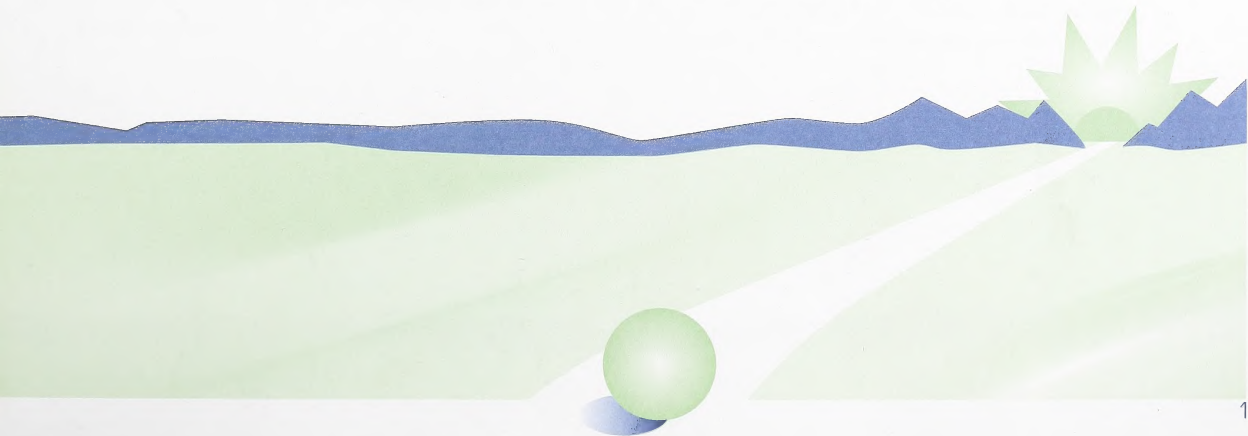
Dear Honourable Premier:

I have the honour of presenting the eighteenth Annual Report of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities. This report covers the activities undertaken by your Council during the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007. It is submitted in accordance with s.7 (1) of the *Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities Act* for your presentation to the Legislative Assembly.

Respectfully submitted,



Rob Lougheed, MLA
Strathcona Constituency
Chair, Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities

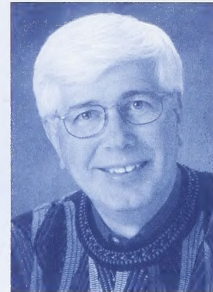




Letter from the Chair

The 2006/2007 fiscal year was another busy year for the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

On December 3, 2006, members of the Premier's Council participated in events in cities and towns across the province to celebrate the International Day of Disabled Persons. In Edmonton, I had the pleasure of presenting two Premier's Council Awards of Excellence and the Gary McPherson Leadership Award. Two other awards were presented in Medicine Hat. I offer my sincere congratulations to all of the award recipients.



The Premier's Council also led two major projects in 2006/2007: a research project about making Alberta parks more inclusive and development of training materials to ensure municipal disaster emergency planning reflects the needs of people with disabilities. Summaries of both are included in this report.

I want to thank Premier's Council members and staff for all their efforts over the past year. Their team effort helps Alberta continue on the path to full inclusion for persons with disabilities.

Sincerely,

Rob Loughheed, MLA
Strathcona Constituency
Chair, Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities



Year in Review

Over the last year, the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities has continued to work towards achieving full citizenship for Albertans with disabilities. Council members coordinate and participate in various activities within the community to create awareness of issues and barriers faced by people with disabilities. They also provide information and updates to government on the status of disability issues.



Alberta Parks Inclusion Strategy

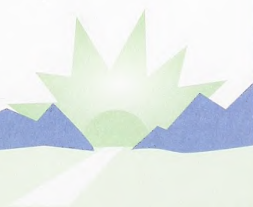
Education programs in provincial parks allow people to connect with the natural world and appreciate the need for long-term conservation of parks and protected areas. The programs play an important role in the quality of life of all Albertans. To better serve all citizens, a strategy was developed to extend the reach of Kananaskis Country park education programs to persons with disabilities. The resulting inclusion strategy serves as a model for other provincial parks.

Developing the strategy was a joint research project funded by the Premier's Council and Alberta Community Development (Kananaskis Country, Parks and Protected Areas). It also formed the basis of a University of Calgary Master of Arts graduate thesis "*Nothing about them without them: Creating a framework for inclusion for persons with disabilities in Alberta Parks and Protected Areas*," which explored parks as educational contexts, and explored their role in social justice education.

This research project began the process of moving beyond *access* and into *inclusion* by inviting persons with disabilities to participate in identifying and reducing barriers, and to *include* them in the process of creating opportunities for everyone to participate fully in parks across the province.

The project initially set out to develop a barrier-free approach to school-based interpretive programs in Kananaskis Country. It quickly evolved however into looking at the benefits, barriers and opportunities persons with disabilities face in parks and protected areas throughout the province.

The study included a literature review, on-line surveys and in-depth interviews. The Premier's Council helped organize and participated in focus groups with persons with disabilities. The resulting strategies have already triggered positive change in several projects in Kananaskis Country and



across the parks system. For example, washrooms, information kiosks and counters at Peter Lougheed Visitor Centre were redesigned to accommodate persons with disabilities, and steps are being taken to ensure persons with disabilities are aware of any volunteer or employment opportunities within the parks.

The inclusion strategy has also laid the groundwork for:

- Integration of inclusion efforts by provincial parks and agencies concerned with human rights, multiculturalism, sports and recreation and citizenship.
- A catalogue of best practices for universal design in outdoor recreation settings such as parks.

- Park planning that goes beyond consultation with existing parks stakeholders and includes those who do not, or cannot, currently access parks.

Finally, the research has revealed that inclusion is not an expensive, unattainable goal but an evolution of existing practices and policies. By building on current park programming and resources, using common sense, planning ahead, and engaging in dialogue with persons with disabilities, *Parks and Protected Areas* can bring more Albertans into meaningful contact with wilderness spaces as visitors, advocates and employees.



Emergency Planning for Persons with Disabilities

During Hurricane Katrina, people with disabilities were among those in the southern U.S.A. most negatively affected. These unfortunate events sparked questions during council's strategic planning process about the state of emergency management for Albertans with disabilities. Although municipal, provincial and federal emergency planning agencies have made significant gains in emergency preparedness, the specific functional needs of persons with disabilities do not appear to have been effectively incorporated into the mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery components of emergency management in Alberta.

In response to this, the Premier's Council approached Emergency Management Alberta (EMA). The parties agreed to work together to develop materials specific to the

needs of persons with disabilities. This material would be included in EMA training courses and eventually lead to changes in municipal emergency plans.

A steering committee including representatives from Emergency Management Alberta, Office for Disability Issues, Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities, Alberta Seniors and Community Supports, the City of Edmonton, the City of Red Deer, and the Fire Commissioner's Office oversaw the project and reviewed prepared materials. A consultant researched and drafted the training materials based on a literary review and interviews with emergency planners and first responders. Meetings were also held with stakeholders within the disability community to hear their concerns and gather input.

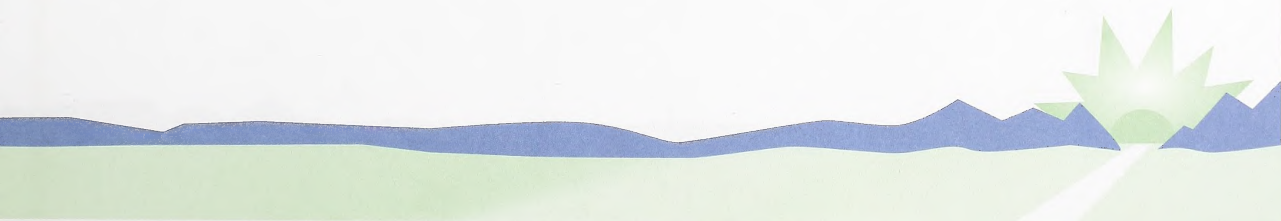
As was the case during and after Hurricane Katrina, the research revealed that the needs of people with disabilities are often overlooked when emergencies and disasters strike even though they are among those who are most vulnerable. As well, many people with disabilities are insufficiently prepared with their own personal emergency plans. In a 2003 national survey, 61% of Americans with disabilities had not made plans to evacuate their homes quickly and safely. There is no reason to believe that the situation is any different in Alberta.

Workshops to share the developed training materials with municipalities and disaster planning stakeholders are planned for 2007/2008. The project has attracted the interest of other provinces and the federal government.

The workshops will use a functional needs approach in helping municipalities develop their emergency plans. This terminology is recommended as a framework for emergency planning as it incorporates a larger range of people who, for various reasons, do not identify themselves as having disabilities. They may, however, have functional limitations such as hearing, seeing, walking, communicating or understanding during a disaster.

During an emergency the following special needs must be considered:

- **Functional Independence.** These are persons who require help to replace essential medications and supplies (e.g. asthma inhalers), or to find equipment (walkers) or to fix/replace damaged equipment (e.g. wheelchairs).
- **Communication.** People may not be able to verbalize, hear verbal announcements, see directional signage or understand the message (e.g. non-English speaker, or someone lacking access to technology like a hearing aid).
- **Transportation.** These are persons who are not able to walk or drive due to lack of mobility, age, addictions, legal restrictions or who don't have access to a vehicle.
- **Supervision.** These are persons who require supervision due to trauma and stress. They may not be able to cope or function in an emergency environment due to psychiatric conditions such as dementia, Alzheimer's, schizophrenia or maturity (child or child-like).
- **Medical.** Such persons require help managing unstable, chronic, terminal or contagious health conditions. They require observation of vital signs and/or ongoing treatment involving medications, respirators, etc.





International Day of Disabled Persons

From December 1-4, 2006, International Day of Disabled Persons was recognized in communities across Alberta. The theme was "*Nothing About Us Without Us.*" The message reminded people that individuals with disabilities should be a part of the decision-making process in programs, policies and decisions that affect them.

The Premier's Council worked with a committee of community representatives to organize events in Fort McMurray, Edmonton, Calgary, Red Deer, Grand Prairie, Lethbridge, and Medicine Hat. The Premier's Council provided provincial coordination and prepared promotional

material. This included posters, brochures, stickers, media kits, newspaper ads and a radio public service announcement. These were distributed across the province to encourage Albertans to celebrate the achievements of persons with disabilities and to get involved in making full citizenship a reality for all.

Some celebrations included the presentation of the Premier's Council Awards of Excellence. They were created in 2003 to highlight the outstanding work of individuals or organizations in enhancing or enriching the lives of persons with disabilities.



Awards of Excellence 2006

Gary McPherson Leadership Award

Sharon Holtman

The Gary McPherson Award recognizes individual Albertans who have demonstrated outstanding leadership or achievement in enhancing or enriching the lives of persons with disabilities. The 2006 winner was Taber resident Sharon Holtman.

Ms. Holtman is a passionate advocate for the rights of children with disabilities. For many years, she has worked with families, service providers and community members to improve service and care for children with disabilities. As Chair of the Alberta Children's Services Ministerial Advisory Committee, she led the development of recommendations that were implemented in the *Family Support for Children with Disabilities Act*, passed in 2004. Since then,

Sharon has continued to educate and help parents understand and work with the new legislation. She is admired and respected for her sensitivity to the needs of children and families while, at the same time, finding balance among a range of opinions.

Awards of Excellence

There are four categories within the Awards of Excellence: employment, education, community and public awareness.

Employment: Pic 'N' Del McKernan Market

Differences are celebrated at Pic N' Del grocers in Edmonton, where persons with disabilities are an integral part of the team. Pic 'N' Del became involved with the Excel Society's employment program in 2004 and now employs several persons with disabilities in a variety of roles. Pic N' Del is a role model for other businesses who wish

to employ persons with disabilities. They assist persons with disabilities overcome barriers to employment, help them develop skills and recognize their contributions.

The Award of Excellence in Employment is awarded to a person, team or organization that has helped create a barrier-free, inclusive environment within the workplace.

Education: Linda B. Stainton

For more than 23 years, Edmontonian Linda Stainton has been a tireless advocate for developing and using innovative strategies that meet the developmental and educational needs of children with disabilities. Her dedication to her work has led to many significant contributions. She has lectured extensively on the subject of inclusive, strategic and informed education for children with disabilities and was a key contributor to *Alberta's Family Support for Children with Disabilities Act*, passed in 2004.

The Award of Excellence in Education is awarded to a person, team or organization committed to helping create a barrier-free and inclusive program, classroom or facility.

Community: City of Medicine Hat

Since 1992, the City of Medicine Hat has been dedicated to building an inclusive, barrier-free community. The City has changed programs and policies, including its Land Use Bylaw, to remove barriers to persons with disabilities. It was also the first

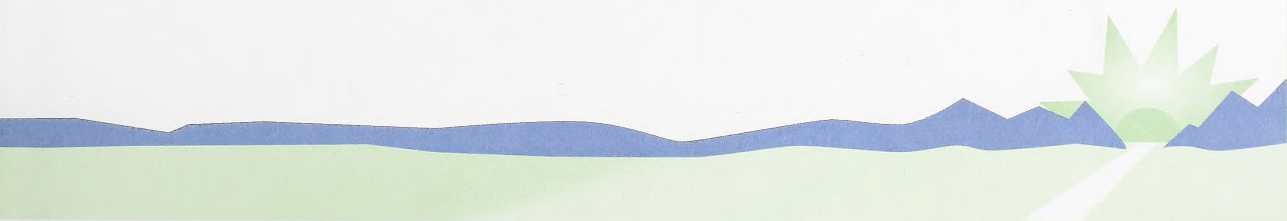
city in Alberta to provide fully accessible transit service on all bus routes. Low transit fares and inclusive programming such as the "Bus Buddy" program have further contributed to more accessibility for all. The City's adherence to principles of inclusivity and its action on disability issues makes it a role model for other Albertan cities.

The Award of Excellence in Community is awarded to a person, team or organization dedicated to creating barrier-free and inclusive communities.

Public Awareness: Allan Jensen

Medicine Hat resident Allan Jensen is a well-respected local artist and retired art teacher who volunteers with the CORE Association's Step by Step Art program. His involvement in the program is key to its success. Allan encourages artists with disabilities and supports their efforts by bringing public attention to their achievements. In 2005, he arranged a public art show of artists with disabilities at the Medicine Hat Art Gallery. His patience and encouragement are credited with helping many persons with disabilities believe in themselves and their work. Allan's commitment and attitude is a major reason why artists with disabilities have a visible profile in the City of Medicine Hat.

The Award of Excellence in Public Awareness is awarded to a person, team or organization that has increased the public's awareness of the benefits and value of a barrier free, inclusive environment.





Premier's Council meetings

The Premier's Council meets face-to-face twice per year, and holds monthly meetings via teleconference.

In April 2006, the Premier's Council met in Medicine Hat. During the meetings, Council members received a presentation on changes to the Provincial Persons with Developmental Disabilities Board resulting from Bill 30 – the *Persons With Developmental Disabilities Community Governance Amendment Act* – outlining the implementation process and how the Premier's Council may be involved. The Strategic Planning subcommittee of Council presented their three year strategic plan, which was approved.

While in Medicine Hat, Council members toured Redi Enterprises and the deaf-blind intervener program at Medicine Hat College.

Council hosted an open house event to provide community members with the opportunity to meet and network with members and staff.

The Premier's Council met face-to-face again in October in Red Deer. Presentations to Council included Family Supports for Children with Disabilities and an update on the status of the Alberta Parks Inclusion Strategy. Council members then toured Michener Centre, Collicutt Centre (a new accessible recreation centre in Red Deer) and Bethany College Side long term care facility, a collaboration between David Thompson Health Authority, Red Deer College and Bethany Care Society. About 80 people from the community attended an open house hosted by the Premier's Council at the Collicutt Centre.



Premier's Council Committees

The Premier's Council has two sub-committees: the Policy and Program Review Committee and the Communications Committee.

Policy and Program Review Committee

The Policy and Program Review Committee's mandate is to:

- Identify and review current and emerging issues and policies at all levels of government affecting and concerning the status of persons with disabilities.
- Review the provision of funding, services and programs to persons with disabilities.

- Make referrals and recommendations to and consult and collaborate with all levels of government, government agencies, volunteer associations, businesses, universities, and other persons on matters affecting and concerning the status of persons with disabilities.

A member of the Policy and Program Review Committee participated on the Steering Committee for the AISH disability awareness training program. The member helped develop the Request for Proposal (RFP), and provided input into the training materials to be presented to AISH staff. A Committee member also participates on Alberta Education's Special Needs Education Committee to provide advice and feedback on education policies for students with disabilities.

Communications Committee

The Mandate of the Communications Committee is to:

- Develop and annually update a communications strategy that supports the Premier's Council strategic plan.
- Oversee development of Premier's Council communications materials and supports (e.g. newsletter, brochures and displays).
- Identify communication gaps between the Premier's Council and its stakeholders and provide recommendations for filling these communication gaps.

In 2006/2007, committee members produced and distributed two newsletters (Disability in Focus) to disability organizations across Alberta. The newsletter highlights the activities and events held by the Premier's Council throughout the year. Members of the Committee attended events and trade fairs held by disability organizations and other groups to promote the Council. The Communications Committee also completed a three year communications strategy that focuses the Premier's Council's efforts on raising awareness about disability issues and promoting inclusion.

Appendix I: 2006/2007 Council Members

Rob Lougheed, Chair

Rob Lougheed has spent most of his adult life in the field of education, with over 28 years of experience as an Alberta educator. In addition to his position as Chair and as MLA for Strathcona, Rob currently serves as a member of the following committees: Treasury Board; the Standing Policy Committee on Health and Community Living; the Capital Region Caucus; the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices; and the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders, and Printing. Rob also chaired the MLA AISH Review Committee.

Shirley Dupmeier

Shirley Dupmeier has spent many years advocating for and with the disability community within Alberta. She is a liaison with many disability organizations in Medicine Hat and was instrumental in the development of the *Alberta Disability Strategy*. She was the winner of the Euclid Herie Leadership award in 2004, and was the founding Chairman and an on-going active member on the Advisory Committee on Disability Issues for the city of Medicine Hat. She has participated on the planning committee for International Day of Disabled Persons events held in Medicine Hat. Shirley's term on Council ended in August 2006.

Mike Hambly

Mike Hambly of Calgary is currently employed with the Independent Living Resource Centre where he advocates and breaks down barriers for people with disabilities. He is active with a number of organizations, including Alberta Disabilities Forum, president of the Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians, National Programming Committee with VoicePrint, Access Calgary Advisory Committee, and many other related disability committees. He brings a unique perspective in both having a dual disability and working for a cross-disability organization. He is also self-employed through his business, Braille It, which converts information into Braille format.

Judy Hellevang

As a volunteer, Judy Hellevang has been associated with the Developmental Disabilities Resource Centre (DDRC) of Calgary for 25 years. She facilitates the DDRC's Board Advisory Committee, which is made up of people with developmental disabilities. Judy has been an advocate for many people with disabilities and promotes their rights. Judy's term on Council ended in August 2006.

Linette Kelly

Linette Kelly of Calgary is a public representative on the Students Finance Appeal Committee and past director of Project 118 Children Services Society. She has served on many volunteer committees as a fundraiser, including an annual benefit for the Calgary Homeless Foundation. She has been an advocate for persons with developmental disabilities for many years and is an active caregiver for a sibling who has a developmental disability. Linette is an executive assistant and corporate secretary for a Calgary consulting firm. Linette resigned from Council in April 2006.

Donna Lajeunesse

Donna Lajeunesse of Grande Prairie has been actively involved in her community for several years. She is an Aboriginal woman with a disability and brings a unique insight into the world of disabilities. She is currently the chair of the Urban Aboriginal Community Advisory Board and an alternate chair for the Community Advisory Board in Grande Prairie. Donna resigned her position on Council in March 2007.

Austin Mardon, Ph.D.

Dr. Mardon of Edmonton has been a member of several different organizations, including the Edmonton Public Library, the Alberta Disabilities Forum, the Edmonton Clubhouse Society, the Schizophrenia Society of Alberta Edmonton Chapter, the Champion's Centre, and the Schizophrenia Society of Alberta Provincial Chapter. He lives with a mental illness (schizophrenia) and believes that the inclusion of people with mental illness in the community is important as it can substantially improve their quality of life.

Pat Marshall

Pat Marshall of Red Deer has experience with community volunteerism and development and has contributed to provincial, regional, and local committees for the development of services for persons of various populations. She has been the vice-chair for the Persons with Developmental Disabilities Central Alberta Community Board, a board development instructor with Alberta Board Development, and an executive committee member with the Canadian Mental Health Association, Central Alberta Region. Pat resigned her position on Council in August 2006.

Greg McMeekin

Greg McMeekin, born and raised in Calgary, was the first person with a severe physical disability to be integrated into the regular school system in Calgary. Through hard work and determination, Greg graduated from high school then earned his Bachelor of Arts Honours Degree in Mass Communication from Carleton University, 2001 and still carries those values with him in all he does. He has worked with the City of Calgary Parks and Recreation – Recreational Services for the Disabled. He is a member of the Calgary Resicare Society Board of Directors, the Accessible Housing Society of Calgary Board of Directors, and the Community Relations Advisory Committee for the Calgary Handi-Bus Association. He is proud to be a member of organizations that work to enhance the lives of Calgarians with disabilities and considers it an honour and privilege to serve Albertans with disabilities.

Lawrence Noel

Lawrence Noel of Bonnyville has been an advocate for persons with disabilities for several years. He lives with a disability and has been an active advocate on behalf of persons with disabilities not only within his own community, but also through cross-community and provincial boards such as the Bonnyville Community Council and the Alberta Committee of Citizens with Disabilities. He is currently president of the People First of northern Alberta, as well as president of the Self Advocate East Network in northeast Alberta.

Diane Ridley

Diane Ridley of Thorsby brings a cross-disability perspective to the Premier's Council and a wide range of experience with issues that affect persons with disabilities living in rural areas, such as transportation and isolation. She has served on several different boards at the municipal level and has extensive experience with numerous government programs including Handicapped Children's Services, Alberta Aids to Daily Living, Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH), and Senior Special Needs Benefits. Diane also has a personal commitment to advocacy on behalf of persons with disabilities as her daughter, now 22, has had a disability since birth.

Robie Scholefield

Robie Scholefield, formerly of Vancouver, now resides in Edmonton. He is the past executive director of the Alberta Association of the Deaf. He has several years of volunteer and work experience within the deaf community and has, for more than 20 years, been involved at local and provincial levels in advocating for persons with various disabilities. Robie brings a unique perspective to the Premier's Council as the first-appointed member who is deaf. He is dedicated to improving the quality of life of persons with disabilities.

Marlin Styner

Marlin Styner of Red Deer has volunteered and worked within the disability community since 1982. He has been a member of several different committees that deal with disability issues such as the Canadian Paraplegic Association Advocacy Committee, the Provincial Barrier-Free Transportation Committee, the Spinal Cord Injury Collaboration Initiative, and the Advisory Committee on Accessible Transportation (National). He has been an advocate for persons with disabilities and has been a presenter for the SMARTRISK Heroes program, the Prevent Alcohol and Risk-Related Trauma in Youth (P.A.R.T.Y.) Program, and the Junior P.A.R.T.Y. Program.

Cheryl Taylor

Cheryl Taylor of Edmonton has volunteered and worked within the brain injury community for many years. She has been a board member of several committees such as the Youth in Transition with Disability Advisory Committee, the Provincial Brain Injury Awareness Week Committee, and the Hope Foundation of Alberta. She seeks to ensure that individuals with different disabilities and abilities are supported and able to actively participate in their communities. Cheryl resigned her position on Council in November 2006.



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